

C11C12/86

6 June 1968

Dear Alistair,

Lest my message through Geoffrey today gets lost in tonight's rush, can I send the warmest thanks for this morning's piece from Los Angeles? The Ambassador Hotel must have been a terrible place to be but you've conveyed the sense and feeling of the occasion excellently. Thank you.

Yours,

Mr Alistair Cooke

01/02/87/1

25 June 1968

Dear Alistair,

First of all, lamentably, a letter I wrote to you on March 22 and sent to the Dorchester (having been told that that was where you were going to stay during the 'Letter from America' celebrations) has just come back undelivered. You must have thought we were a bit churlish in not sending any congratulations or good wishes, so I send the letter on now.

Next, how about the planning for the Conventions and the campaign in the autumn? I did write a little while ago. I hope that that letter arrived safely in New York. It asked for confirmation that you will in fact be doing the Conventions (as I assume must surely be so, on past experience). It said that we were ready to second John Cole and Hella Pick to supplement you and Richard during the later stages of the campaign. It would probably be best if John Cole comes from mid-September for about three weeks and Hella from early or mid-October until after polling. We ought also to try to arrange that one or both of them undertake journeys across significant parts of the continent away from the main candidates. I got very good results out of Geoffrey's own journey last time from the Pacific North West down to the Middle East. Is all that in keeping with your ideas? And what, if anything, is Richard going to do outside Washington? He would probably like to get away from there for a bit.

Finally, and returning in a way to 'Letter from America', John Cole remarked yesterday that he had heard the re-broadcast at breakfast time and that it was a brilliant piece on your experience with the students at Berkoloy. He said, not for the first time, that it's a pity that we don't perhaps more often have some of your discursive and thoughtful comments for the 'Canadian'. I know well that the manner of broadcast 'Letters' is necessarily different and that what can be a conversational piece on the air would not necessarily read well in print. Even so, if you feel moved at any time to write anything in that way, touching as it would on a current issue such as the students' attitudes, please do. With a little warning, we can find room, and even without warning we can commonly do it.

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C1/C2/882

I hope incidentally that you also had my thanks for the Californian reports on Kennedy. It must have been a gruesome experience. From a cold-blooded newspaper point of view, however, we all felt here that we had been admirably served by you, David, and the two in Washington.

Yours,

Mr Alistair Cooke

1150 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10028

Thursday July 18th 1968

Dear Alastair:

The various tripe and prima-ries and general political mooching -not to mention the trauma of June 14th, and a month-long back affliction -have put me far behind in my mail. But I ought to have ~~HHH~~ answered your letter about the Campaign long before now. Please forgive.

By the way, many thanks for your undelivered good wishes on the 1000th broadcast. As for doing something of the sort for the M.G., it is fraught with perils -everything depends on the way it is read aloud, and I am never very happy when The Listener takes a talk, cuts it down to a single theme, thus abolishing the contrived waywardness, and prints it with regular punctuation. However, let me think about it. As it is, there are no overlaps between the dispatches and the talks. They seem, in the writing, to be done by different lobes of the brain.

Now for the Conventions and the campaign. Yes, indeed, I shall be in attendance at Miami Beach and Chicago (if that's where the Democrats are able to settle). I anticipate the usual problem of the early deadline, which -however late -say, 10 p.m. your time - is too early, by about four hours, to take in the Convention proceedings of that day. Of course, things like credentials committee fights, sudden declarations by LBJ that he's for Wallace, would be flashed as news stories. But the best coverage of the Conventions I've done has always been the continuous long story, following day by day - the drama as it unfolds and in sequence. This means covering the session of the previous evening and incorporating the morning's developments. It really does not matter that Wednesday's paper is about Monday evening and Tuesday morning (all the Convention sessions are from 6 p.m. on). This way, we have always given the best continuous story. The other papers -trying to snatch bits of color and also ~~HHH~~ flash dubious "hard" news\*-fall between two stools. Anyway, I am praying for -maybe - a regular space so I can give you something long and exciting, or funny, that other people are not doing.

In Chicago, I expect David Gray to be along as an onlooker. But there's no reason he shouldn't take an isolated news story or aspect. He will be covering Forest Hills and wants to stay on and attend the Dems.

Now, since, for the first time, we are having a Convention late enough to end the weekend before Labor Day, which is the official opening of the campaign, the campaign coverage ought to begin on September 2nd. (The Conventions used always to be in June, forcing us to report a synthetic midsummer campaign before September -lately they've gone to July and now, thank God, to August. The Reps. meet August 5th to 9th, the Dems. August 26th to 31st.) I suggest that David Gray be pressed to stay on another ten days or so to cover the opening of the campaign. Then send John Cole in mid-September. Then Hella at the beginning of October. Richard does not expect to do more than catch the candidates for a day or two when they are ~~EH~~ near his town - Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, for instance.

It will be a great help to have someone always on the road. David Gray was a blessing in California -doubly so, as things disastrous

\*thus competing  
hopelessly with  
TV

turned out. We never quite knew where Peter Jenkins was, but when I was sure David was with McCarthy and Jenkins with Kennedy, it left me free to do the essential job of reporting the whole political picture. This, I do believe, is our strength over, say, the Times and the Telegraph. Their "teams" wrote picturesquely and often well about the actual rally or the bus-ride; but the danger of being new to the game is either too much enthusiasm for a given candidate, or a distortion of political emphasis (or-as somebody said about Lincoln Steffens -"as a political reporter, his trouble was that he believed what he was told.")

The necessary thing is that I should always be in touch with the guy or guys on the road. There is always a warning or explanatory piece to be done: e.g. party loyalty is non-existent in California politics and you have to beware of the assurances of any partisan group; or enthusiasm for Wallace in Pittsburgh should not seem to outweigh the hold of the Governor over the labor vote; or one should be careful of putting too much stock in a candidate's private poll-you have to know who did the poll and how much he was paid for it (this, by the way, is the suspicious factor in all Rockefeller's surprising polls -he is spending a mint on them).

I am talking now about the Campaign. You needn't fear that I will cover the Conventions as a pundit -you know from experience that they are high or comic drama, and the trick is to weave the information, the color and the analysis together, as in a page by Balzac -or, perhaps, Thurber!

We may have trouble getting a private line in Chicago, because of the damned telephone strike. Even if it's settled, they are going to be days behind in installing. But I know where I shall be in Miami Beach and Chicago, so I shall make sure there's a clear line ~~WHEN~~ before I get there.

If things work out with David Gray, I might want to take a week off right after the Dems. -they are exhausting affairs and I don't expect to get any holiday till after the November election. Richard, by the way, is going to figure his dates for a break by next week, when we shall meet and talk.

I think that's about all for the present. I have made a point since the California primary of doing a periodical report on the candidates and the general picture. It seems excessive -and could bore the reader -to fake a full-blown campaign now, and then have to start all over again in September with the real thing. My fan mail on "Letter From America" is very instructive here. It is overwhelmingly against saturation by American politics. And most of the protesters are obviously intelligent people.

Let me know tentative plans for Gray, Cole and Hella.  
Love to Miranda.

As ever,

*Al. S. Air*

01/012/96

Alistair Cooke

1150 Fifth Avenue

New York, N. Y. 10028

Wednesday September 25th 1968

Dear Alastair:

I hope you agree with me that the team coverage of the campaign is going very well. I certainly wish we could keep two regulars on the road, in addition to Richard and me. However, I ~~am~~ expecting Mella this week-end, and when John Cole, David Gray and Jonathan Steels have gone back I hope we can devise a fair division of the labor.

There have been, as you know, drastic changes in campaigning this year, and the night-time rally in the vast auditorium seems just about over - for security reasons if no other. Nixon, however, has realized how much more exposure he can get by doing as he did in Columbus: which was to fly in, make six ten minute tv. talks (plus panel questions) in a studio, talk to one luncheon and fly out four hours later, in the knowledge that his one hour's worth of tv. would be seen later in the day in 24 cities of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky and so on.

Anyway, I should like to give Mella her head and later on I mean to do a stint with each of the three. But in the main - since British viewers are seeing so much of the candidates - I mean to drop in on the main regions, from say the middle of October on and summarize what is happening in each. The balance of the political-social situation is something you can't see on television. So this is the general plan.

Now, you may want to make your plans for after the election. So far this year I have had off only one week, in February, and the one week, at the end of March,

that I came to London for the BBC dinner. I am pretty pooped(strangely, it took me a month or more to get over the nervous trauma of the Bobby Kennedy horror)what with M.L. King,the Conventions,Chicago and the rest. I badly need a break. I thought of finishing off the election week and then going away from the 10th of November. I have six weeks coming to me. But maybe since it's been so unevenly divided,I could stay away five weeks and hold one over for general distribution in 1969. Anyway, the six weeks would make my call resume on Sunday December 22nd. I'll be glad to make it on the 15th if, for any reason,that would be better.

Maybe you'd like to have Nella stay on after the election,or arrange to have someone else come over and spell her. David Gray? He is doing admirably,I think.

Please let me know about this. God bless you and yours.

M. S. Fair